Catherine Drury Gribbin
Lindsay, Ontario.

SENATOR BURNS

Senator Patrick Burns was the third son of Michael O'Byrne and Bridget Gibson. He was born on July the 6th in the year 1853 A.D. on a little farm near Bowmanville, Ontario, Canada, and was baptized "Patrick O'Byrne". From colloqual use of "Burns" instead of "O'Byrne" by the average pioneer--most of them totally uneducated--he got into the habit of identifying himself by the name "Burns" and did all his business later under that name; his relatives, also, in time, assuming that appellation.

His father, Michael O'Byrne was of Irish nationality, was born in County Mayo, Ireland, and while yet a young man narried Birdget Gibson, a lady of notable refinement and good Irish stock.

Mr. O'Byrne and his bride came to Canada,--the land of fabulous wealth and opportunity--about the year 1847 A.D.

I do not recall hearing the name of the ship but I think my mother, then a young child, came over on the same ship, a sailing vessel. The name of this ship could, I think, be ascertained at the port of Boston, Mass., U.S.A. as it broke all previous records, being the first ship to make the voyage across the Atlantic in twenty-one days.

The Grand Trunk Railway was being put through from Montreal to Toronto about that time so Mr. O'Byrne took up a little farm adjacent to Bowmanville, Ontario. He was not wealthy but had the ordinary comforts of the pioneer, or a little more. He had good stock and his horses moved many

a family into the, then, newly opening country which became the townships of Carden, Eldon, Bexley and etc. of the County Victoria. These lands were given free or almost free to encourage settlers.

Mr. Michael O'Byrne became inbued with a desire to locate in this virgin forest, whose possibilities no one knew, and about the year 1860 A.D. he moved his little family to Eldon Township,about three miles from Kirkfield. There he built a comfortable home. Material (logs) being plentiful, he built a spacious log house, and good outbuildings, especially a good large bank barn with good accommodation in basement for live stock, superior to any other pioneer's first buildings.!

The moving was unfortunate for Pat's and his brother's opportunity for education. No school within three miles of unbroken forest, no roads but trails, blazed trails at that, and the wolves were very numerous.

In those years winter was extremely long, settling in with very deep snow about Nov. 1st, often three and four feet on the level. Far too deep for children to attend school at any distance, even had there not been the terrible danger of wolves and etc. And in summer in addition to the danger of wild animals there were the terrible bush fires. So Patrick could not go to school until he was quite a big boy. And another handicap to a good educational foundation was that teachers were scarce and far from being competent. Certificates of efficiency not even thought of, for all this was prior to the Ryerson system of public school education. Anyone who could read

and write,--which were few--claimed to be capable of instructing, and was hired to do so, sometimes scarcely knowing beyond the multiplication tables, and that the earth was round.

At an early age, Patrick became desirous of seeing a little more of this big world and becoming self-supporting, but occupation away from home was a problem; no factories at all, nothing but lumbering and a little road making. These openings were filled by matured men. The settlers all had their land to clear but each had home help for this was the epoch of large families, Patrick, himself, being the fourth child in a family of eleven. I might also say it was the epoch of hospitality for whenever it required a number to perform some job--logging or raising a building--all the neighbors came gratis, no one evaded.

Patrick, finally, obtained employment--with a farmer at Derryville, a small hamlet south of Beaverton, Ont. Here he worked faithfully from break of day until black dark at night for fifty cents a day. However, he at this early age realized that not what you earned but what you saved made you rich, and he sure saved. After that he helped to operate a little sash and door mill in Kirkfield where everything was made by hand. Fur-bearing animals were in abundance and trapping free but there was no market. By the time he was twenty-one years old the excitement of "Red River Valley" was in full blast and he directed his footsteps westward to that "Mystic Land". When he reached Rat Portage (now Kenora) he feared if he paid for transportation the rest of the way he might lack funds on his

arrival. So he procured some bread and a hunk of cheese, and with his gun for protection, and a few garments, he walked all the way from Rat Portage to Winnipeg.

Here he was lost in admiration of such expanse of free country, and realized that it must eventually become connected with Canada's metropolis and emporium.

He accepted whatever occupation came to his hand--helping the earlier settler, and in building up Winnipeg which then was a small town. Trade was carried on by waterway, (Red & Assinaboine Rivers) and Red River carts.

In 1881 A.D. the Canadian Pacific contract was ratified by the House of Commons, and Pat knew that men at such work would require good substantial foods, and meats were considered the best of these, so he decided to open a meat business. His father, before him, knew the value of such a business for he, each year, produced several stall-fed cattle for the early spring market. Pat bought his first two beefs from a man by the name of McIntyre, and in order to save his small capital, he mowed prairie hay to pay for them.

He always had the philanthropic spirit, and many an early settler who had become discouraged by successive crop failures caused by early frost in August and had not the means either to go on or leave, found a buyer for all he had in furniture and also implements, in Pat Burns, who did not have any immediate use for them but helped the settler to leave.

In time these accumulated but as the seasons seemed to moderate others who came to see the West and decided to stay were glad to buy these commodities from Burns and pay full value.

About the year 1885 or '86 the famous Klondyke gold fields became known and Pat's brother, Dominic, went forth and amassed quite a little fortune. On his return to Vancouver he became a magnate builder. He built the Burn's Block (marble from Mexico) on Granville Street, Vancouver.

Pat took an interest in Klondyke also, and coming East to Ontario, shipped several carloads of horses there about the year 1889 or '90. He was the first man to ship horses to Klondyke.

In time he settled permanently in Calgary making it the centre of his large business in meats, butter and cheese. At the opening of this century he had stores in thirty western towns.

In 1900 A.D. he built his beautiful Calgary residence at a cost of fifty thousand dollars ($50,000.00). Most of its furnishings he imported from Britain and Europe at a fabulous cost.

In 1901 A.D. he married Eileen Ellis, daughter of the Cattle King of British Columbia, a lady of culture, talent and refinement, well fitted to grace his luxurious home and entertain his honored guests. The marriage ceremony took place in London, England. She bore him one son in 1906. The son pre-deceased his father, dying suddenly

of a heart attack in September, 1936 A.D.

The Senator's charities were legend. He never refused a charity. Numberless were the families he helped during the great depression.

During the first world war 1914 - 1918 he gave in abundance. Field guns and uniforms for twelve hundred soldiers were among his many donations.

He had little opportunity to enjoy his beautiful home for his business took him so many places--Eastern Canada, United States, Mexico, and even Great Britain and Europe.

Senator Patrick Burns after a long, eventful and very useful life, passed to his reward on Feb. 24th, 1937 A.D.

The Senator's parents died in 1889 A.D. His father in April while on a visit to Ireland and just about to embark for home, collapsed and died in port; the mother in August of the same year at the old pioneer home in Eldon, Ontario, Canada.